

# INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

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### TEXAS RANCH NOW A WATERFOWL REFUGE

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The Aransas Migratory Waterfowl Refuge on the Gulf Coast of Texas is considered by the U. S. Biological Survey as one of the important wildlife refuges in the Gulf Coast area.

Established as a Federal refuge in 1937, Aransas contains 54,538 acres of land nearly surrounded by water. Situated in Aransas and Refugio Counties, Tex., the refuge is bounded on the east by San Antonio Bay and three smaller bays, on the west by St. Charles Bay, and on the south by Aransas Bay. The tract, known as Blackjack Peninsula, was formerly the St. Charles Branch.

Now administered by the Biological Survey, Aransas Refuge is a natural resting and breeding ground for thousands of migratory birds and other wildlife. Each year during the migrating seasons thousands of ducks and geese use the peninsula. As many as 15,000 ducks and 10,000 geese of various species have been observed on the area at one time. Great beds of plants in the bay waters adjacent to the refuge provide food for waterfowl.

Other notable wild birds found on the refuge at various times of the year include roseate spoonbills, reddish egrets, white-tailed kites, Audubons caracaras, sandhill cranes, and whooping cranes.

The whooping crane has held the interest of naturalists from the earliest settlement of America. In its former abundance the species migrated in large flights, performing weird convolutions in the air and grotesque dances on the ground, accompanied by the notes from which it takes its name. It is said the

sound can be heard for several miles. Requiring large, wild tracts of open country for its habitat, the whooping cranes once ranged the country from Canada to Mexico, but have been depleted with the advance of civilization. Threatened with extinction, the species finds Aransas attractive because of its isolation.

Under previous ownership the refuge had been protected from hunting and trespassing with the result that it is already well populated with upland game in addition to waterfowl. Several thousand white-tailed deer, peccaries, wild turkeys, and quail use the peninsula for its extensive supply of live-oak-brush acorns, wild grapes, wild dewberries, and other upland game foods.

The Biological Survey, appreciating the importance of the Aransas Refuge as a natural wildlife habitat, is making every effort to maintain the refuge in its natural state. Development work undertaken to improve conditions is principally for the creation and maintenance of fresh-water ponds throughout the peninsula for waterfowl feeding and resting areas.

A CCC camp established on the refuge in October, 1938, has been engaged in construction of these water areas, preparation of truck trails, patrol roads, dikes, and fire breaks. Buildings now under construction by CCC labor include a manager's residence, assistant manager's residence, a service building, equipment shed, and boathouse.

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